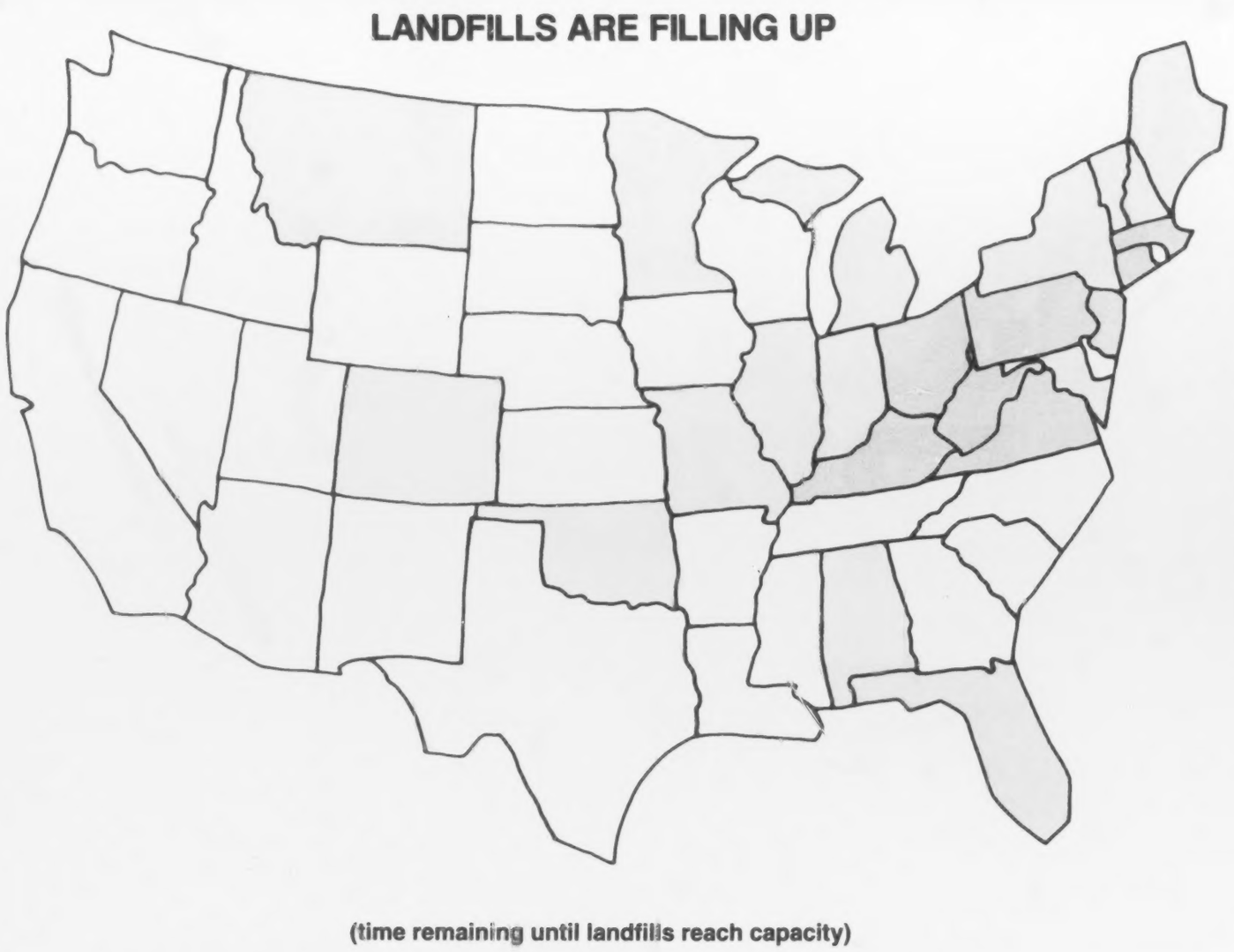
SPECIAL REPORT: THE GARBAGE CRISIS


LANDFILLS ARE FILLING UP
(time remaining until landfills reach capacity)
Less than five years
Five to 10 years
More than 10 years

DUMPING COSTS ON THE RISE
(Average Regional Tipping Fees*)

	1987	1988
Northeast	$39.23	$45.48
Midwest	12.71	17.95
South	12.27	15.87
West	10.75	13.06

*Tipping fees are the fees landfill owners, usually municipalities, charge commercial haulers to enter and dump.

Source: Waste Management magazine

Industry scrambles to block flurry of new rules

by Peter Romeo

In a frantic search for ways of easing the nation's garbage glut, lawmakers are burying food-service operators under a mountain of legislative proposals.

Spawned by a dire shortage of landfill space, the bills attempt to curtail the nation's garbage output through measures ranging from recycling incentives to outright bans of single-use food containers.

"There are probably some 800 pieces of legislation on the packaging issue right now," said John Merritt, vice president of government and public relations for the Hardee's burger chain, "and there are probably 50 more that we don't even know about."

"If there's any issue that was addressed the most this year, it's solid waste," observed Colette Coleman, director of state relations and grass-roots development at the National Restaurant Association.

"They want to push the restaurant industry to get up and do something about solid waste," said T.J. Williams, who, as executive director of the North Carolina Restaurant Association, fought against 20 state solid-waste proposals in 1989. "This is really forcing us to do it."

Despite the association's lobbying efforts, the state passed a measure that will force restaurants to re-examine the packages they use. Beginning in 1993, "polystyrene containers will have to be recycled at a 25-percent rate, or they will be banned," Williams said. "We are not going to be able to meet that target."

But, he continued, "we could have gotten much worse. We were able to take out of the law what is called an ADF — an advance disposal fee — that would have put a penny charge on every package we use."

More stringent yet are polystyrene container bans already enacted in Minneapolis; Berkeley, Calif.; and Portland, Ore. Similar bans are poised to go into effect in Suffolk County, N.Y., and Florida, which has more restaurants than does any other state except California and Texas.

Thus far in 1989, 14 state legislatures have considered the taxation of non-biodegradable packaging materials, according to the NRA. Six proposals have been defeated, but the other eight remain in limbo, the association indicated.

Packaging-oriented measures constitute only a portion of solid-waste proposals pouring out of legislatures throughout the land. Dozens of others — if not hundreds — are intended to foster recycling. Beginning Jan. 1, 1991, restaurateurs in Connecticut will in effect be forced to recycle all glass and metallic containers; landfills and incinerators will no longer accept those materials.

To facilitate recycling, operators in the District of Columbia will be required to sort their garbage beginning Oct. 1.

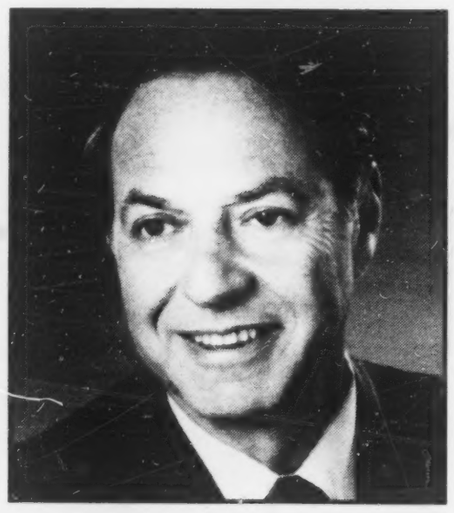
"There are a lot of things introduced at the state legislatures, but there are even more things at the local level that you never even hear about," said the NRA's Coleman.

And the legislative mills continue to whir and churn.

"In Massachusetts they're just about to put on the ballot what is probably the nation's most stringent proposal concerning recyclable packaging," said Gene Karpinski, executive director of the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, a prominent pro-recycling group.

Representatives of MassPIRG, a local affiliate, are gathering petitions for a 1990 referendum vote on the initiative, which would ban all containers that are not "environmentally acceptable." Fast-food operators and take-out shops would be required to serve foods in reusable packages made with recycled materials. Violators would be fined $1,000 for each piece of packaging that would not conform to the standards.

"Clearly it's ambitious and aggressive, but we feel it's the direction in which we should be heading," said Amy Perry, MassPIRG's director of recycling initiatives. "It allows for a five-year phase-in, and there's no question that the public wants environmentally sound packaging."



Harris Rusitzky

> **"I'm encouraging our industry to be on the forefront of solving the problem."**

"The problem is that consumers don't always have the facts," countered Nancy Sherman of the Foodservice & Packaging Institute, a trade group representing packaging manufacturers. "The consumer is unaware of what the impact would be. It would literally take every grocery package off the shelf."

"Whenever there's a proposal like this, there's resistance and all kinds of dire warnings about what will happen," Perry said. "Look at aerosol cans a few years ago, when people wanted to discourage their use because of damage to the ozone layer. Industry resisted. But today we have pumps, and it's no big deal any more."

"We would like to see the states take a more comprehensive approach," instead of banning or taxing containers, Sherman said. "Waste-to-energy" — the use of trash as fuel to generate electricity and heat — "should also be part of the approach. And it should take into account that landfills will always be with us."

"Usually the first thing you see is an outright ban," said Linda Way, a legislative analyst for the NRA. "That percolates into a more comprehensive approach. Some of that is starting now as more business organizations see what's going on and get involved."

The NRA is striving to avert adverse legislation by encouraging members to address the solid-waste problem before it merits hard-line action.

"I'm encouraging our industry to be on the forefront of solving the problem — to take the lead in helping their community," said Harris Rusitzky, president of the NRA. "And we're seeing many of them do it."

"For instance," he continued, "tree trimmings are a big part of what goes into landfills. Some operators with large, landscaped parking lots are saying, 'Bring us the tree trimmings. We'll chop them into wood chips and use them on our gardens.'"

Rusitzky, a contract feeder based outside Rochester, N.Y., has selected the solid-waste issue as a major focus of his one-year presidency, which expires in May. He has been criss-crossing the country in an effort to rouse operators into action before they are saddled with unwanted legislation.

"Local legislators are making decisions not on the basis of fact, but on the basis of emotions," he said. "For instance, there are bans on plastic boxes and cups, even though they account for very little of what's in landfills. And a ban is not the way to go. We saw that with alcohol."

Yet all observers agreed that the legislative onslaught will continue.

"We're going to see a lot of it — everything from packaging taxes to requirements that packages be made of recyclable materials," Sherman said. "There might be some outright bans."

"People have been kicking clamshells" — the fast-food boxes that have become a highly visible component of litter — "and then there's the whole problem of where we're going to put our garbage," Coleman said. "We're running out of landfill."

The number of dump sites has dwindled by 66 percent, from 18,000 in the late 1970s to roughly 6,000 today, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

And Americans continue to generate a greater amount of trash every year. The volume of municipal solid waste increased by 60 percent between 1960 and 1986, to 157.7 million tons, according to an NRA study. "Unless changes occur, the amount of waste will increase by 25 percent, to nearly 193 million tons annually by the turn of

(See GARBAGE, page 100)

SPECIAL REPORT: THE GARBAGE CRISIS

McD recycling program works against landfill dumping

(Continued from page 112)
to-energy incineration, source reduction and landfilling when the previous options don't work.

"We know that there is no single answer to the solid-waste crisis in this country," Harrington said. "As a general statement, we will say that restaurants should be involved in recycling, but recycling alone is not the answer nor is it a universally applicable approach."

Harrington said one problem with recycling is that there is not always a readily available market for products that have been made from recycled trash.

Keough, the EPA official, applauded McDonald's attempt to stimulate customer participation in the waste crisis problem, and he said he hopes it sends a signal to other large corporations.

"The beautiful thing about this plan is its dual purpose: It will reduce the amount of landfill dumping, and it makes the customer share in the responsibility of doing something to help the environment. I hope this sends a message to other large-volume businesses with large volumes of trash."

As Denison, the environmental scientist, applauded McDonald's effort, he challenged the company to broaden its program beyond polystyrene to paper and food waste and to consider a systemwide effort.

"It's a positive step, and we're very happy to see it not jump on the bandwagon for biodegradable plastics," Denison said. "But this effort represents only 5 percent of its stores, and it's only involving trash the customers throw away in the store, not the take-out market, and that is a considerable amount.

"If it looked comprehensively at its contribution to the solid-waste problem, it would find it could do a lot more to promote recycling among its customers and in particularly as it relates to recycling paper products. After all, it feeds 20 million people a day — a tenth of this country's population."

But Armando Ojeda, a spokesman for McDonald's, said the program has the possibility of being instituted systemwide. However, Ojeda said, McDonald's is hamstrung by the sparse number of recyclers in the plastic business.

"As you know, the plastic recycling industry is very immature right now," Ojeda said. "We're committed to the concept of recycling wherever there are facilities to meet our needs."

Ojeda pointed out that McDonald's has taken a number of steps in the recent past to reduce the amount of trash its units generate. Among them have been using thinner packages, recycling corrugated cardboard, using tanker trucks to supply syrup rather than cardboard containers and conducting customer separation tests in Oregon, California, New York and New Jersey.

Plastics recycling: A process just getting started

by Milford Prewitt

Plastic and polystyrene recycling is an industry in its infancy, and it's looking to food service as one source of sustenance.

Unlike glass, aluminum, paper and cardboard, which restaurateurs have been recycling with fervor for the past several years — particularly along the East Coast — few operators are contributing to the plastic recycling effort.

"I don't think this is a fault of the food-service industry necessarily," said an executive for an Ocean City, Md.-based recycling company. "After all, this is an industry that I guess you could say is still up and coming and like any up-and-coming industry, we have to learn how to market ourselves."

The Maryland recycling company and others of its ilk are almost indistinguishable from a typical trash hauler. The company makes long-term contracts with customers for periodic pickup of aluminum, plastic, polystyrene and glass and even provides the separate and appropriate bins for each recyclable material.

But where they differ from traditional trash haulers, the difference is stark. In many cases the carters *pay* the restaurant for the recycled material. The recyclers make their money selling the refuse to recycling centers that make other products from it.

Few recycling centers, however, encompass the scope and self-sufficiency of Plastics Again of Leominster, Mass., formed a year ago by a consortium of seven major plastic and polystyrene manufacturers and now playing a pivotal role in McDonald's plans to recycle plastic from its Northeastern outlets.

"We're really going after the schools the most," said Tom Tomaszek, a plant manager for Plastics Again. "If we could make an impression on students, we might make an impression that would last a lifetime."

Plastic recycling has received mixed reviews from environmental groups.

Some activist groups favor the complete elimination of plastics from the environment on one extreme while other environmental activists favor degradable plastic as a point of compromise.

Whatever the solution, environmental groups are unified in their opposition to dumping plastics in landfills.

"Recycling as it is being done in the restaurant industry is a step in the right direction," said Paul Underhill, a spokesman for the National Audubon Society, "but it has to be expanded.

"It's just too local right now, and it really requires a national effort. People in the restaurant industry need to encourage their suppliers to use biodegradable plastics in their containers."

Although the non-degradability of plastic and polystyrene has long been cited by activists as an environmental hazard, mounting scientific research is raising the possibility that so-called degradable products do not decompose any faster.

The 10-year landfill study conducted by scientists at the University of Cincinnati disclosed that vegetables, newspaper and clothing — all natural products thought to decompose — degrade much slower than had been assumed. In fact, the study, presented during the Degradable Plastics and the Environment Symposium in Chicago last August, found 10-year-old newspapers that were still readable and carrots whose cores, when split open, were still orange.

Additionally, during the 10 years the dump was studied, the volume of trash was reduced through decomposition by only 5 percent.

"You see, many of the things that we may think of as being very readily biodegradable are not rapidly biodegraded in the sanitary landfill," said Riley Kinman, an environmental engineer who conducted the study. "Now they are under degradation, but it's a very slow process and it's a complex function of many variables."

One of the factors contributing to the slow decomposition of natural products like paper and clothing is the lack of oxygen at landfills. As trash is piled on top of more trash, products decompose more slowly, since the oxygen is cut off.

Landfill managers attempt to speed up the decay process by repositioning mountains of garbage with bulldozers or cranes. But scientists insist that repositioning trash is a poor way to speed decomposition.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also has reservations about degradable plastics.

Paul Keough, the acting regional administrator of the EPA office in Boston and an admirer of McDonald's recycling efforts, said the problem with degradable plastics is that the products remain for hundreds of years and take up landfill space.

"What is the difference if the biodegradability drops from 1,000 years to 500 years?" Keough asked. "It's still taking up space in the landfill.

"We prefer to see recycling and waste minimization. The plastics people are really a long way behind the recycling efforts in glass, aluminum and tin."

Additionally, Keough said, many of the chemicals that are used to make degradable plastics are an environmental hazard in some concentrations.

Jerry Johnson, executive director of the Polystyrene Packaging Council, said that the industry had bowed to environmental pressure a few years ago to remove chlorofluorocarbons, ozone layer destroyers, from polystyrene and that it was continuing to be responsive to the environment. But he predicted that escalating legislation would require food-service operators to address the issue more seriously.

"There are only three ways to get rid of trash," Johnson said. "You can dump it in landfill, you can recycle it or you can incinerate it. But legislation for the prohibition of plastic is not the solution, and degradability is not the answer either.

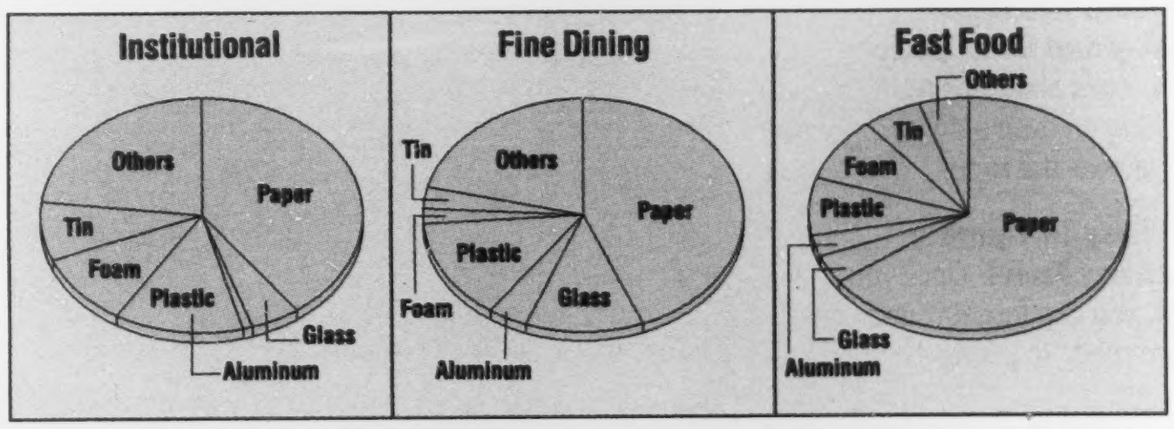
"This controversy is going to catch restaurant people ultimately because they will have to make decisions about it in their own operations."

Scientists raise the possibility that if plastics were recyclable, it might pose more environmental problems than reduce them.

"As we make our products more degradable, it will be more difficult to recycle them," said Woo Young Lee, who is director of research and development activities for Mobil Chemical Co. and spoke during the Chicago symposium.

"As you make it more degradable, you have to compromise long-term stability. So as a recyclable component, this is not desirable.

"One of the distinct advantages of plastic over other packaging material was that it does not degrade easily and therefore does not contribute to pollution. As we make plastics more degradable, the probability for pollution increases due to higher heavy metals contents."



A SLICE OF SOLID WASTE

(Waste generated, by segment, as percent of total waste)

	Paper	Glass	Aluminum	Plastic	Foam	Tin	Recyclable
Institutional	40	5	1	13	10	8	35
Fine Dining	44	12	4	14	2	3	33
Fast Food	65	4	3	8	9	6	30

MORE ON SOLID WASTE

	Institutional	Fine Dining	Fast Food
Customers served daily	1,000	100-450	600-1,000
Number work shifts	3	3-3	3-4
Employees per shift	16	5-9	12
Employees collecting waste	4	2-6	6
Number of outside bins	2	1-3	2-3
Daily Dumpster Trips	10	1-6	8
Number of feet to bins	10	10-40	20
Labor cost of waste control per month	$400	$600	$30
Number of hauler pickups	daily	daily	daily
Hauler cost per month	$260	$75-350	$250-$300

Source: University of Wisconsin at Stout Waste Study. Study conducted for TFC Corp., Minneapolis.

Notes: The university studied eight institutional food service operations (one with compactor), five fine dining establishments (none with compactors), and two fast food outlets (one with compactor). All operations use 10-, 20-, 30- and 40-gallon inside containers to collect wastes; all had garbage disposal units in kitchen.

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CONGRESSIONAL INFORMATIO 141
4520 EAST-WEST HIGHWAY
BETHESDA MD 20814

Nation's Restaurant News®
THE NEWSWEEKLY OF THE FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY
SECOND CLASS
Vol. 23, No. 47 Published every Monday by Lebhar-Friedman Inc.; $3 a copy, $29.50 a year November 20, 1989

Drive-thrus get into the fast lane

Upstart 'burger boxes' challenge fast-food giants

by Jack Hayes

As if the nation's hamburger giants weren't pressed enough by their own expansion, months of industrywide discounting and the public's mounting suspicion over a thing called fat, now they're being squeezed by an enemy shouting price and service: The drive-thru-only competition.

Bent on stealing away traditional burger customers with a redefined menu of price and convenience, the low-overhead drive-thru-onlies are wedging like 500-square-foot Davids into the shadows of labor-intensive McDonald's, Hardee's, Burger King's and Wendy's, and the bruises are beginning to be felt.

"You go into a city and start taking out a couple of million dollars, and you know it's coming from somewhere," reasoned Jim Mattei, founder and chairman of the 21-unit Checkers of North America drive-thru, based in Mobile, Ala.

Particularly in the Sunbelt — a region that has given birth to operators like 165-unit Rally's in Louisville, Ky.; 45-unit Central Park in Chattanooga, Tenn.; 25-unit Fast Track in Baton Rouge, La.; and a 15-unit chain called Ed & Ed's out of Nashville, Tenn. — the presence of the "Box" is being taken seriously.

Boxes, as they are called by the sit-down burger competition, may total as many as 700 units in all markets nationwide, according to the best estimates. Otherwise labeled "kiosks," drive-thru-onlies are mini sandwich kitchens built to serve at least a car a minute in high-traffic lunch and dinner hours.

The drive-thru-only philosophy is fast-service burgers, fries and drinks at low prices. While some drive-thru-onlies stick to a narrow burger-only menu, others are offering hot dogs, chicken sandwiches, shakes and even breakfasts.

SEGMENT LEADERS

Rally's Louisville, Ky.	**165 units**
In 'N Out Burgers Baldwin Park, Calif.	**55 units**
Central Park, U.S.A. Chattanooga, Tenn.	**45 units**
Fast Track U.S.A. Baton Rouge, La.	**25 units**
Checkers Mobile, Ala.	**21 units**

Chain operators are seeing "burger boxes" surface in markets like Boston, Detroit, Chicago and Indianapolis. But in New Orleans and Jacksonville, Fla. the drive-thru-onlies have been passing burger bags out of windows for three or more years. Checkers is due in Atlanta by January, according to Mattei.

"They're like little squirrels in the woods, digging up acorns between the legs of us big deer," said a McDonald's franchisee who believes the drive-thru-only competition is positioned to survive. "But they're not going to run us out of the forest because we eat the leaves and the branches, too."

Indeed, the seductive side of drive-thru-only operating — its relatively low entry cost, $250,000 on average compared with at least $1 million for a major chain franchise startup — has lured a raft of the undercommitted and underfunded.

And while the segment appears poised for spectacular growth, an early shakeout has already begun.

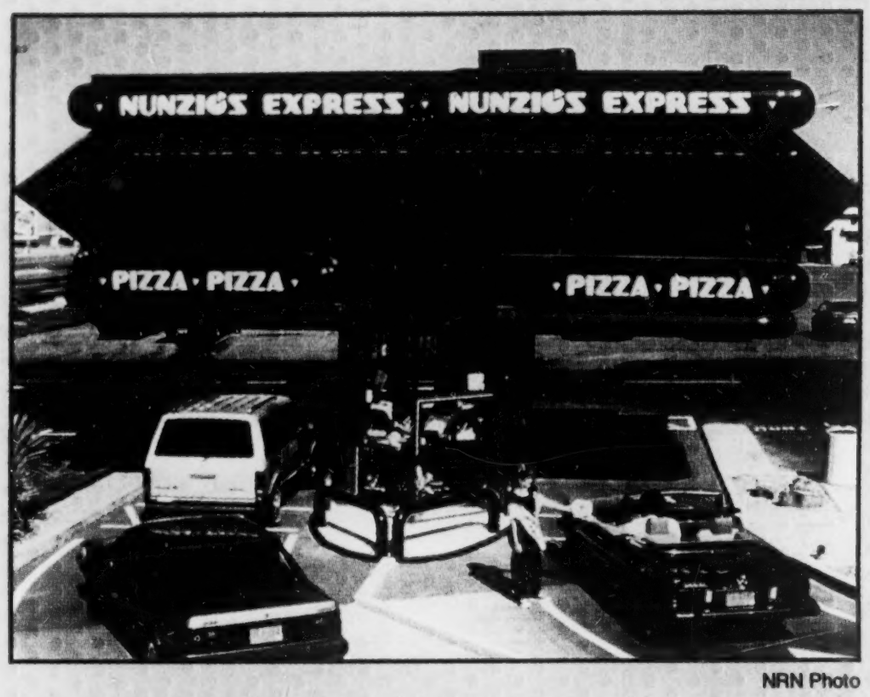
"There's possibly 100 mom-and-pop units out there in the process of closing right now," predicted Checkers founder Mattei.

"The real battle isn't going to be David vs. Goliath, but David vs. David," added Mike Ballard, the president of Double Drive-Thru Inc. which owns Ed & Ed's. "It's only two hits a week that separate the major league from the minor league ballplayer."

At the same time Ballard, who was a former Hookers Hamburgers franchisee, admitted the chains aren't sitting idly by while the drive-thru-only operators take away their business.

"I started one store next to a Burger King, and it came right back with the 99-cent Whopper.

*(See **BURGER**, page 70)*



NRN Photo

One of the high-tech Nunzio's Express pizza units.

1-minute pizza sizzles

by Richard Martin

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Three brothers from the Bronx have launched a futuristic drive-thru-only pizzeria whose one-minute baking cycle threatens to eclipse the service goals of McDonald's and the delivery record of Domino's.

The unorthodox Nunzio's Express, which resembles an alien spacecraft, also challenges fast food by pitting $1.79 pizzas against the burgers and chicken of the quick-service mainstream.

Frank, Nick and Tony Casale, owners of the five-unit Nunzio's Pizza chain here, debuted their strikingly designed express prototype on northwest Albuquerque's fast-food row in mid-October.

After placing orders via two-way video, patrons of the double-lane restaurant get their baked-to-order pizzas in about 60 seconds — thanks to a patented production system and two

*(See **NUNZIO**, page 70)*

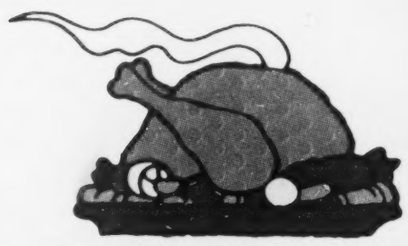
Operators serve up all the right stuffing

by Peter O. Keegan

In an effort to drum up traffic, operators around the country are creating special menus for Thanksgiving Day.

Rather than spending the day watching the bird cook, mashing potatoes and dreading the inevitable cleanup, more and more Americans are looking for alternatives to making the traditional meal at home.

Restaurateurs from coast to coast are targeting consumers with everything from unique variations of Thanksgiving favorites to traditional buffets featuring turkey,



stuffing and vegetables.

The Four Oaks restaurant in Los Angeles is turning turkeys inside out for its Thanksgiving celebration.

Chef Peter Roelant will stuff turkey breasts on the outside to provide a roasted bread outer crust, while cranberries, garlic,

*(See **OPERATORS**, page 71)*

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Rogers ousted from Bonanza

by Bill Carlino

DALLAS — Jeff Rogers, who held the top post at Bonanza for six years, has been dismissed by Michael Jenkins, chief executive of Ponderosa, the 700-unit budget steak-house subsidiary of Metromedia.

Jenkins issued Rogers' exit visa just two weeks after the New Jersey-based telecommunications conglomerate closed a deal to acquire Bonanza for $10.25 per unit share, or about $70 million.

Rogers' dismissal stoked already inflamed emotions among some Bonanza franchisees over the proposed merger with Ponderosa.

The firing, coupled with what they termed "foot-dragging" with regard to issues affecting Bonanza franchisees, prompted a band of angry Bonanza area developers to go straight to the top — drafting a letter to John Kluge, the billionaire chairman of Metromedia.

In a three page statement, the

*(See **BONANZA**, page 4)*

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Nation's Restaurant News (ISSN 0028-0518) is published weekly, every Monday except that last Monday in December, by Lebhar-Friedman, Inc., 425 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Subscription Department, Nation's Restaurant News, 305 Madison Ave., Suite 535, New York, N.Y. 10165-0079.

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Vol. 23, No. 47 November 20, 1989

NEWS BRIEFS

McD tests 4 meals in Nashville units

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — McDonald's has added four packaged dinners to the chain's lengthy list of test products.

The new array comprises a shrimp "basket," consisting of deep-fried shrimp with curly french fries and coleslaw; a chicken-club meal, which includes a bacon-topped version of the McChicken sandwich and curly fries; and a seafood item that features a larger, revised version of the chain's fish fillet sandwich.

In addition, test units here have bundled the chain's McRib barbecued-pork sandwich with curly fries to form a dinner package.

In the face of sluggish sales, McDonald's has been testing a number of products, including pizza, frozen yogurt and crudités.

Staffs of LA Hyatts set to strike after 26 arrests

LOS ANGELES — Twenty-six people were arrested when about 800 union members attempted to jam the lobby of the downtown Hyatt Regency here to protest the contract that Hyatt Hotels has offered the staffs of three hotels in the area.

About 750 workers at the Hyatt Wilshire, Hyatt Sunset and Hyatt Regency hotels were set to strike over the proposed contract. Union officials asserted that the terms would allow Hyatt to schedule some employees to work 10 straight days without overtime pay.

The arrests came after Hyatt, which had been the target of previous protests, obtained a temporary restraining order barring demonstrators from entering the Regency lobby. The chain has been locked in a prolonged contract dispute with Local 11 of the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees union.

Vern Stewart takes A & W posts

LIVONIA, Mich. — Vern Stewart, a former executive of Sonic Drive-In and Dunkin' Donuts, has been named executive vice president and chief operating officer of the 530-unit A & W Restaurants fast-food chain.

In the newly created posts, Stewart oversees day-to-day operations of the system, with responsibility for such departments as research and development, purchasing, construction and marketing.

In June, Stewart resigned as chief operating officer of Sonic following what the company termed "a problem on company policy." It did not elaborate.

DD Acquisition raises stake in Dunkin' Donuts

TORONTO — The Canadian partnership seeking control of Dunkin' Donuts has raised its stake in the snack-shop franchisor to 44.8 percent of total shares outstanding, from 38.5 percent.

DD Acquisition Corp., an investment concern formed by Cara Operations and Toronto businessman George Mann, disclosed its holdings shortly after Dunkin' detailed plans to accept formal bids from suitors. The doughnut maker said it has met with several parties but has not identified any suitor except DD.

DD has tendered a $45 per-share for Dunkin's stock.

Congress kills Section 89

WASHINGTON — Congress killed the much-loathed Section 89 tax law by tacking a repeal measure onto the government's debt-ceiling bill, which President Bush immediately signed into law.

The nullification was the only amendment attached to the debt cap, which determines how much the federal government can borrow to remain in operation. Earlier, Republican senators and congressmen had attempted to tie the repeal of Section 89 to President Bush's proposal to cut the capital gains tax. The legislators had sought to pass the tax cut by bundling it with the popular Section 89 measure.

Section 89 required employers to prove that they did not discriminate when providing health benefits to employees.

Calif. vote looms on drink tax

SACRAMENTO, CALIF. — A coalition opposing alcohol abuse has proposed a ballot initiative that would levy a 5-cent tax on each 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine and 1 ounce of liquor sold in California.

Vowing to fight the tax, alcoholic beverage manufacturers said the measure would cost their industry $290 million a year and 6,000 jobs. The state tax on wine, which has not been raised in 50 years, would go from 1 cent to $1.28 a gallon. Beer taxes, unchanged since 1959, would go from 4 cents to 20 cents a gallon. The liquor tax, last raised in 1967, would increase from $2 to $6.40 a gallon.

Tax-hike proponents, including politicians, law enforcement groups, trauma physicians and alcohol treatment associations, said the measure would raise $800 million a year to defer taxpayers' estimated $13 billion annual cost for alcohol-related problems.

The initiative, currently awaiting the state attorney general's certification, would need 595,485 signatures to qualify for the November 1990 ballot.

Taco Bell launches 'Tacos To Go' kits

IRVINE, CALIF. — Taco Bell, in a bid to boost take-out and drive-thru sales, has begun packaging tacos in 6- and 10-pack "Tacos To Go" boxes at the chain's 3,010 units nationwide.

The packages — paper cartons with slots in which the tacos are nested — sell for undiscounted multiples of standard prices, currently ranging from about 49 cents to 59 cents per taco. Taco Bell said the packs would be permanent offerings.

NRN opens Hot Line for design views

NEW YORK — Nation's Restaurant News is opening its toll-free Hot Line to gather your opinion, as a reader, on our new look.

Last week NRN unveiled a contemporary new design with bolder graphics and an easier-to-read format. We want to know what you think, pro or con.

Call the NRN Hot Line, toll-free, 24 hours a day, all this week.

A recorded message will ask for your opinion. If you like, you may leave your name and phone number so that we can contact you to confirm your statement.

Call the NRN Hot Line number at: (800) 687-7711.

Greensboro passes no-smoking laws

GREENSBORO, N.C. — By a paper-thin margin of 173 votes, residents here have voted to require restaurants with 50 seats or more to set aside a fourth of their dining rooms for non-smokers.

The referendum makes this city of 200,000 the first in North Carolina with a mandatory non-smoking rule for operators. It takes effect Jan. 1. Violators will be fined $25.

A study by the City Council, which recommended voluntary adherence, found that a third of the city's more than 400 restaurants already feature no-smoking areas.

Wendy's taps Calhoon for marketing post

DUBLIN, Ohio — Wendy's International has promoted Donald Calhoon to vice president of corporate marketing, with responsibility for all aspects of the burger chain's advertising and promotional programs.

The post had been vacant since Bruce Ley left the restaurant operation several months ago to become president of a Louisville, Ky., advertising agency. Charles Rath, Wendy's executive vice president, had been supervising the day-to-day advertising efforts.

Calhoon was previously vice president of field marketing.

Baran takes ladle at Loews Anatole

DALLAS — Tony Baran, the former chef of Houston's Palacio Tzintzuntzan, has surfaced as executive chef at the Loews Anatole hotel here.

Baran, a 26-year-old University of Houston graduate who made waves serving black antelope tamales and smoked crawfish and venison toast to Houston crowds, said he has plans to re-do the hotel's Chinese restaurant, The Plum Blossom, into an East-meets-Southwest concept similar to Palacio Tzintzuntzan.

Baran, sous chef Scott Edelen and general manager Mitch Kwartler left Tzintzuntzan several weeks ago following a dispute with the restaurant's main investor, George O. Jackson Jr.